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For Immediate Release
May 9, 2006

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GOP lawmakers join father of slain Florida girl to push protections for children

LANSING – Legislative Republicans including Sen. Alan Sanborn, Richmond Township, joined with Mark Lunsford, the father of a Florida girl who was murdered by a convicted sex offender, at a news conference Tuesday to advocate reforms that would help protect children from across Michigan from sexual predators.

“I want Michigan to pass something through because it sends a message to sexual predators ‘Don’t mess with Michigan,’” said Lunsford, whose nine-year-old daughter, Jessica, was kidnapped, raped and murdered by a repeat sex offender. “I want Michigan to be one of the first states to pass tough legislation. How do we justify it to our kids that we let these guys out? We need to show our kids how much power we have and protect them.”

Lunsford testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, on which Sanborn, R-Richmond Township, serves. The panel approved parts of the legislative package Tuesday.

“Our children deserve a safe environment to grow up in that’s free from predators,” Sanborn said. “No parent should have to live the terrible nightmare that Mark Lunsford has endured.”

Lawmakers are reviewing proposals that would allow certain repeat sex offenders who target children to be sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Other legislation would create Michigan’s version of “Jessica’s Law,” which would require at least 25 years in prison for anyone 17 years of age or older convicted of sexually assaulting a child younger than 13.

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Note: Photos of Sen. Sanborn and Mark Lunsford are available on the senator’s photo Web page, www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Sanborn/Sanborn.htm.